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TAGS: PREL MARR MASS JO
SUBJECT: U.S.-JORDAN JOINT MILITARY COMMITTEE MEETS
REF: AMMAN 8243

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) The U.S. and Jordan held their annual bilateral Joint Military Committee (JMC) meetings in Amman, Jordan (reftel) November 8 and 9. The session, co-chaired by the Jordan Chairman of Defense Gen. Khaled al-Saraireh and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Peter

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Rodman, reviewed the regional threat environment and bilateral military exercises, assistance programs, and cooperation. The JMC sessions were productive, frank, and busy, and were typical of the close cooperation between the U.S. and Jordan. For the benefit of the U.S. team, the GoJ presented its still draft strategic plan before its formal presentation to the King.

Regional Threat Assessment

12. (S) Defense Intelligence Agency representatives and Jordanian Military Intelligence Directorate staff provided briefings on the regional security situation. The GoJ focused on the political and regional threat posed by Iran, the proximate threat of Syria, and the challenges of counter-terrorism.

-- (S) The GoJ sees Iranian influence behind recent developments in the region -- the gains made by Hizballah and HAMAS and the spiral of violence in Iraq. Iran will continue to use a variety of means to support Syria and its allies in Iraq and Lebanon.

-- (S) Jordanian-Syrian relations are at low ebb, with the King and Bashar al-Assad unable to come to terms on a personal or official basis. In the JAF's view, Syria remains a conventional and unconventional threat to Jordan. It has the ability to strike Jordan with ballistic missiles and large, if outdated, ground forces. Syria continues to support militant groups by providing sanctuary, weapons, and training.

Requests for Increased Assistance

13. (C) The GoJ expressed deep appreciation for the strong assistance the United States has given -- U.S. assistance has provided Jordan the backbone of its military capabilities, and helped to make Jordan one of the most able militaries in the region. The GoJ seeks additional funding from the U.S. to achieve the goals it will outline in its Strategic Defense Review (SDR) when finalized, and to fulfill existing requirements -- which include complete construction of all

phases of the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC), the C4ISR program, border security enhancements, and establishment of a National Crisis Management Center, as well as other projects.

Strategic Defense Review

14. (S) Major General Mohammed al-Allaf, Assistant Chief of Staff for Planning and Organization, presented the draft results of Jordan's first SDR to the JMC. Allaf headed the Jordanian team that used a threat-based approach to assess current capabilities in order to identify shortfalls. The SDR concludes that Jordan needs a more modern, agile force with capabilities to confront terrorism and the threat posed by Syria. To provide these capabilities, Jordan will continue to lighten its conventional forces, eliminating some units and restructuring others into light infantry or special operations units, and will seek additional helicopters, command and control systems, and support equipment. In a new development, Jordan will likely request assistance in acquiring a missile defense system with which to counter the Syrian ballistic missile threat. The SDR and its draft recommendations are the result of a year-long process of analysis and assessment. The GoJ will seek additional U.S. monetary support for its force transformation efforts.

Comment

15. (S) Jordan continues to be a close and trusted partner in U.S. efforts to combat terrorist and other regional threats. The Jordanians have troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan conducting medical support operations, as well as forces deployed in support of numerous peacekeeping operations worldwide. Jordan recently lost two soldiers serving in Haiti, and suffered other casualties there earlier this year. Jordan is broadly supportive of U.S. regional goals, and has proved to be a valuable regional platform from which the U.S. can conduct training. Jordan's requests for additional funding for FMF echo requests made at previous meetings. The roles Syria and Iran have assumed in Jordan's strategic assessment are notable. Jordan's conclusion that it needs a missile defense capability is a new item on the GOJ agenda. It is not yet clear how high these new priorities based on the SDR will fare in the face of limited budgets.

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